

Sandman Noel on track to run in the Sahara

Noel Hanna who will be taking part in a gruelling race in the Sahara Desert. sg12/129

Desert race will test Dromara man's stamina to the limit

A DROMARA man's stamina will be tested to the limit when he takes part in a 140 mile race across the Sahara Desert next month.

Noel Hanna (32) from Bookside Road, will be competing against 600 top athletes from all over the world in the Marathon Des Sables in April.

Not only will he have to run miles every day for six days under stifling conditions - he will also have to carry an average 15lbs pack.

The civil servant and fitness

instructor has been training for months to take part in the event.

But Noel is no stranger to extreme racing.

Completing

A few years ago he beat 40 other contestants in the Himalayan Race. By completing the event he raised over £18,000 for the British Brain and Spine Foundation which undertakes research at the Royal Victoria Hospital.

And last year he competed in an event in Los Angeles where he competed against nearly 200 runners and finished in the Top 20.

This time it is the weather conditions which Noel is most concerned about.

"In order to get acclimatised I have had to use a bicycle in a

sauna so that I can get used to the heat," said Noel.

"I have been told by runners who had competed in the race that their training shoes actually melted on their feet - that's the sort of temperatures we are talking about.

"So it is important that my body is used to the soaring temperatures.

"As part of my training I run six days a week up to an average of around 100 miles.

"We have been told that we will have to carry our own food with us so that will add at least 15 pounds in weight.

"I know that I will be competing against some of the best but I enjoy running. It has cost me over £2,000 to get there but I love the thrill of running."

